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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: **EAGR FAID PREL US ZI**

SUBJECT: UN IN ZIMBABWE ANNOUNCES MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN  
COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

1.(SBU)Summary. UN Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator Agostinho Zacarias met with donors on September 15, 2005 to announce a series of measures intended to strengthen the overall coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts in Zimbabwe. Donors welcomed these measures as long overdue. If the UN takes steps to demonstrate the improvements announced by Zacarias, post would recommend considering increased support for humanitarian coordination. End Summary.

2.(SBU)On September 15, 2005, USAID Officers attended a meeting called by the UN Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator, Agostinho Zacarias, to update donors on humanitarian assistance issues. Participants included major donors, members of the UN Country Team and visiting representatives from the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in New York and Geneva. Zacarias introduced the meeting by announcing a series of measures intended to strengthen humanitarian coordination and information sharing. To start with, the UN will establish a new office for humanitarian coordination, to be staffed by OCHA, that will be more autonomous than the existing Humanitarian Support Team administered by the UNDP. The UN will seek donor funding for this new office in the approximate amount of US\$2 million/year.

3.(SBU) The new humanitarian coordination office will take primary responsibility for the related tasks of information sharing and humanitarian assistance coordination. Regarding information sharing, the new office will begin next week issuing weekly humanitarian situation reports to donors, NGOs and other partners to ensure that all interested parties are kept up to date on current issues. The office will also systematically track and report on contributions from donors and expenditures of funds. On the coordination side, Zacarias stated that he will convene regular meetings (at least monthly) of UN agencies and NGO implementing partners on humanitarian issues, as well as regular consultations with donor countries.

4.(SBU) To highlight the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe, Zacarias noted that the UNDP is currently discussing with the GOZ a proposed visit to Zimbabwe of Jan Egeland, Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, which the UN

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hopes to reach agreement on in the next few weeks.

5.(SBU) USAID Officers had the opportunity to discuss these developments privately prior to and after the meeting with Agnes Asekenye-Oonyu, the OCHA Assistant Director visiting from New York. Ms. Asekenye-Oonyu (protect source) confided that she viewed her assignment as providing daily, on-the-job training to Zacarias on his responsibilities as UN Humanitarian Coordinator, ensuring that humanitarian principles are fully respected and not compromised. In this vein, she informed USAID Officers that she had specifically suggested the measures Zacarias announced to strengthen humanitarian coordination.

6.(SBU) Comment: The measures announced by Zacarias to strengthen humanitarian coordination and information sharing are welcome. We and other donors have noted the UN's recent lack of regular reporting on humanitarian issues, compared to last year when the UN issued weekly situation reports. We have also noted the dearth of UN-sponsored donor consultation meetings, which afford donors the opportunity to express their views on current humanitarian issues and thereby try to shape the UN's approach to dealing with the GOZ. With only a few exceptions, most of the UN-donor meetings on

humanitarian issues that have been held in the past several months were called at the request of one or more donor agencies, not the UN. Despite these positive statements from Zacarias, the proof will be in the pudding. We suspect that other donors, like us, will want to see concrete improvements in humanitarian coordination and information sharing before opening up the checkbook even more. The complexity of Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis requires active coordination and post is in favor of continued support for this function through OCHA. If the UN Country Team takes real steps to demonstrate the improvements announced by Zacarias, we would recommend considering increased support.

DELL